

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)

SYRIA REGIONAL CRISIS

The full implementation of this version of the HIP is conditional upon the necessary appropriations being made available from the 2020 general budget of the European Union

AMOUNT: EUR 293 000 000

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2020/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes¹ is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO²'s partners and to assist in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

Third Modification - 11 December 2021

Humanitarian needs in Northwest Syria (NWS) have increased significantly over the past months due to the cumulative and protracted forced displacements, economic hardship and the impact of COVID-19. Moreover, soaring food and fuel prices, lack of livelihood opportunities and reduced food production have led to widespread food insecurity. On top of this, the arrival of the winter season with its freezing temperatures and the lack of insulation in shelters have created an additional emergency that needs to be addressed immediately.

Over 1.3 million people in NWS need additional winter clothes and thermal blankets, more than 2.5 million people need fuel support, at least 220 000 people are in need of food and livelihoods support over the winter, more than 800 000 people have WaSH needs associated with the winter, 85 camps are in urgent need of road repairs to ensure access during winter, and 250 camps need gravelling and other winter maintenance.

On 30 November 2020, UNOCHA published a revised assessment of winterisation needs of USD 49 000 000, showing a substantially increased gap in financial requirements (previously UN estimate dating from end October 2020 assumed a gap of USD 9 000 000).

In order to support the humanitarian response, the European Commission allocated additional funding of EUR 3 000 000 from the Operational Reserve to be fully invested in emergency winterisation activities focusing on the most urgent needs of the most vulnerable people. This will be carried out through pre-selected DG ECHO partners with capacity to operate immediately.

¹ Technical annex and thematic policies annex

² Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

Second Modification - 12 August 2020

On 4 August 2020, two major explosions occurred in the seaport of Beirut, killing an estimated 200 people, injuring thousands, and causing massive and widespread destruction. Some 200,000 housing units have been affected, and many hospitals, schools, storage facilities, and key infrastructure severely damaged or destroyed. This dramatic incident will further exacerbate the already extremely dire situation resulting from the combined effects of the political, socio-economic and financial crises, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, which have amplified vulnerabilities among Lebanese and refugee population, pushing more families into extreme living conditions.

In order to support the humanitarian response to this crisis, and to contribute to the rapid scale up of humanitarian interventions, the European Commission is making available an additional amount of EUR 30 million to address and respond to the rising humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable individuals.

Preferred partners for the implementation of the necessary assistance will be organisations with an existing, relevant humanitarian operational presence in Lebanon, proven technical expertise and capacity in the areas of intervention, and enhanced monitoring mechanisms.

The full implementation of this version of the HIP is subject to the adoption by the European Parliament and European Council of the necessary appropriations to be made available from the 2020 general budget of the European Union.

First modification – 26 May 2020

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Covid-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. The pandemic continues to spread across the region, causing additional humanitarian needs in particular for vulnerable populations.³

In Syria, after more than 9 years of conflict, the health system and water and sanitation infrastructure is particularly inadequate to cope with the pandemic. Densely populated areas in Northwest Syria, including over-crowded IDP camps and informal settlements, are particularly exposed to an outbreak, as access to basic health and WASH services remain scarce, testing capacities extremely low, medical equipment and disposables difficult to procure and humanitarian access particularly challenging.

In Lebanon, against the background of a severe economic crisis, the pandemic is seriously overstressing the health, water and sanitation infrastructure, and has led to a deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees have sharply increased, notably through its impact on livelihoods and the already fragile protection space. The deterioration of the situation has started creating a negative push factor on returns, although the conditions in Syria are not yet conducive.

On the basis of the current identified needs, an additional amount of EUR 4 million has been mobilised for Northwest Syria and EUR 1 million for Lebanon, aimed at supporting Covid-19 preparedness and response measures in the Health and WASH sectors, in addition to a strengthening relevant logistics in Northwest Syria. Proposed Actions must be well integrated and mainstream protection concerns in line with the HIP Technical Annex. Partners should demonstrate capacities for immediate implementation, through direct or remote modalities as justified by the context.

1. CONTEXT

DG ECHO's Integrated Analysis Framework for 2020 identifies *extreme* humanitarian needs in Syria and *high* humanitarian needs in Lebanon and Jordan. Syria's INFORM risk index ranks at 7.1/10, Lebanon at 5.3 and Jordan at 4.1.⁴

Inside Syria:

As the Syria crisis has entered its ninth year since the start of the conflict, the scale, severity and complexity of humanitarian needs remain extensive.

While there has been a slight reduction in violence in parts of the country over the past year, the impact of present and past hostilities on civilians and civilian infrastructure, as

³ A total amount of EUR 40 million for the covid-19 response is implemented through country-/crisis-specific allocations under several HIPs for: Bangladesh, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Palestine, South Sudan, Sudan, Northwest Syria, Uganda, Venezuela and Yemen.

⁴ This HIP covers the humanitarian needs identified in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan respectively. Needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey, Iraq and Egypt are covered under the respective financing decisions.

well as continued massive displacement of populations both inside the country and across the wider region, remain the main drivers of humanitarian needs. An estimated 11.7 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance, 6.2 million are internally displaced and 1.1 million are still living in hard to reach areas.

While 2019 has seen a consolidation of government control in Central Syria, tensions remain high in South Syria. In Northwest Syria, fighting has continued. The situation in Idlib has dramatically deteriorated, creating large-scale internal displacement⁵, while more than 3 million civilians, among them 1 million children, are in life-threatening danger due to the escalating hostilities. In Northeast Syria, an estimated 175 000 people have been newly displaced in the wake of the Turkish incursion into Northeast Syria launched on 9 October 2019, while hundreds of thousands remain in IDP camps with limited freedom of movement and access to humanitarian assistance. Provision of basic services has been impacted, further affecting the host communities, including significant numbers of returnees in need of livelihood opportunities and more durable assistance.

Hostilities have an immediate impact on the life of civilians, causing death and injury, large-scale displacement, destruction of properties and of civilian infrastructure, as well as exposure to multiple protection risks, including violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) by all parties of the conflict. The deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, such as schools and health facilities, as well as of humanitarian and relief aid workers, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), forced displacements, arbitrary arrests and forced detention, summary executions, enforced disappearances, widespread contamination of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), recruitment and use of child soldiers, and severe restrictions of humanitarian access are still commonplace in Syria. Meanwhile, repeated commitments failed to translate into swift and unimpeded quality access to all those in need. The availability of and access to basic services remain limited, while livelihood opportunities are scarce for vulnerable communities.

In neighbouring countries

There are around 3 658 250 registered Syrian refugees in Turkey, 924 161 in Lebanon, 657 445 in Jordan, 228 851 in Iraq and 130 371 in Egypt.⁶

In Lebanon, security considerations increasingly dominate the Syrian refugee discourse. Refugees remain subject to curfews, evictions, arbitrary arrests, forced encampment and other movement restrictions as well as the victims of demolition of private assets. Some practices continue to pose serious risks to the safety of Syrians and Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) and could amount to *refoulement*. With varying degrees, the combination of closure of international borders, stricter internal controls and discriminatory security screenings continues to pose significant protection concerns.

The living conditions of refugees, despite massive international support and some positive national policy changes, continue to deteriorate as a result of significant social, economic and legal challenges. Refugees continue to face obstacles to obtain or renew their legal stay, indispensable to access services and protection. Local regulations reduce their access to livelihood, and the difficulties to comply with host countries' employment

⁵ An estimated 855,000 new displacements have been reported during the January/August 2019 period.

⁶ UNHCR Operational Portal, September 2019.

legislation contribute to push vulnerable refugees to result to negative coping mechanisms or risk deportation back to Syria.

Meanwhile, resettlement to third countries continues to decline. During the January/June 2019 period, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) submitted a total of 11,801 refugee cases for resettlement, compared to 23 413 cases in 2018, 29 788 in 2017 and 47 930 in 2016⁷.

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

1) People in need of humanitarian assistance:

Inside Syria:

There are over 6.2 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 11.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance (of whom 5 million in acute need), 5 million children and 3 million Persons with Disabilities (PwD). 1.1 million people still live in Hard To Reach areas (HTR). The conflict has affected all 14 Syrian governorates. Substantial displacement continued uninterrupted in 2019, including multiple times. Over 438 000 Palestine Refugees in Syria (PRS) still live in the country⁸, of whom 60% have been displaced at least once. While a limited number of returns have been observed in 2019, mainly from IDPs from within Syria itself, large scale new displacements have continued to take place in 2019, with over 900 000 IDP movements tracked between January and 15 September 2019 in Northwest Syria and some 175 000 in Northeast Syria since 9 October 2019 alone in the wake of the Turkish incursion. The conditions for safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable returns are still not met inside Syria.

Access to life-saving assistance remains difficult, while the availability of basic commodities and services is still scarce in most parts of the country. Civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools have been disproportionately affected by the conflict, leading to a continued reliance on external humanitarian assistance.

In neighbouring countries

There are 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, representing the world's largest refugee population. According to UN agencies, over 1 245 000 refugees of all origins are recorded in Lebanon (over 924 000 Syrian refugees, 270 000 Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon, 28 800 Palestinian Refugees from Syria, 19 930 refugees of other nationalities) and 751 015⁹ in Jordan. Lebanon accounts for the world's highest number of refugees per capita (173 refugees/1 000 Lebanese). Jordan has the second highest ratio (87 /1 000).

The impact of the continued presence of Syrian refugees in these countries also affects, either directly or indirectly, other refugee populations. Vulnerable host communities are also deeply affected by the prolonged effects of the Syria crisis, while local resources and infrastructures to respond to the needs are under continued pressure. Vulnerable host communities will therefore continue to be included in DG ECHO's actions and support, as resources allow.

⁷ UNHCR Resettlement Data Finder

⁸ UNRWA June 2019.

⁹ UNHCR, July 2019

2) Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

Inside Syria

Provision of essential health services continues to be disrupted by ongoing hostilities, where indiscriminate attacks on health facilities have resulted in 46% of all hospitals and health facilities being either destroyed or partially dysfunctional. Since the beginning of the conflict, 867 medical staff have been killed.¹⁰ There were 142 reported attacks on health facilities in 2018 alone.¹¹ Hospitals and medical facilities which are still operational continue to be critically understaffed, while most hospitals are not receiving enough supplies and medicine, nor enough funding to pay their staff and running costs, significantly hindering both the availability and continuity of services to the population.

Eight years into the conflict, a huge economic contraction has left the Syrian population deprived and destitute: with over 83% of all Syrians living below the poverty line and 6.5 million Syrian being food insecure.¹² Meanwhile, households' purchasing power and food security continue to decline due to the compounded effects of soaring inflation, unemployment rates and lifted subsidies. The most deprived families are fully reliant on external assistance. Lack of access to and limited availability of safe water, both in terms of quantity and quality, continue to affect Syrians disproportionately. Up to 55% of the population relies on alternative and often unsafe water sources to meet or complement their daily needs¹³. At least 70% of sewage systems are untreated and at least half of them are either not functional or only partially functional, leading to significant health risks. Poor hygiene conditions lead to disease outbreaks, especially in areas of high concentration of IDPs and camps such as in the Idlib Governorate and in Northeast Syria.

Children continue to be disproportionately affected by the conflict as they remain particularly vulnerable to negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage, child labour and recruitment. Access to education remains limited, with 2.1 million children aged 5 to 17 out of school, and an additional 1.3 million at risk of dropping out¹⁴, with repercussions to last for generations to come. Children continue to experience traumatic events and shocks, including separation, loss of family members and grave child rights violations. Hundreds of schools and learning facilities have been damaged or destroyed in airstrikes, with 762 attacks on education facilities reported since 2011¹⁵. It is estimated that 1 in 3 schools is either damaged or destroyed, while those still standing are often used as temporary shelter by the displaced population.

With 10.2 million people exposed to explosive hazards throughout the country, the scale of ERW contamination is unprecedented. Syrians continue to need humanitarian assistance and protection, specialised medical treatment and safe roads to escape conflict zones or to return to their place of origin safely when the conditions allow.

¹⁰ WHO, April 2019

¹¹ HNO 2019

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 2018 CPEA report

Civil documentation, Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues, freedom of movement, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), particularly sexual harassment, early/forced marriage and domestic violence, remain other significant protection concerns.

In neighbouring countries

After several years, the protracted nature of the displacement of Syrian refugees has led to worsening economic conditions and growing protection concerns as a result of the widespread use of negative coping mechanisms, notably child labour, early marriage and transactional sex. The majority of refugees living in host countries still do not have adequate access to public services such as education, health and livelihoods. Stringent controls and arbitrary security screenings continue to raise protection concerns.

Although substantial progress has been made by regional hosting governments in meeting the objectives of international conferences in support of Syria and the region, such as the London Conference in 2016 and the three Brussels Conferences on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region in 2017, 2018 and 2019, continued efforts are needed to further enhance the protective environment of Syrian refugees as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian response in neighbouring countries.

Lebanon

While some progress has been made to promote the protection of refugees in recent years, including a waiver on residency fees for registered Syrian refugees and facilitation of birth and marriage registration, the implementation of these measures remains challenging and unevenly implemented. A large part of the refugee population still lacks legal status (73% of the refugee population¹⁶), exposing them to greater levels of protection risks (e.g. limitations to freedom of movement due to fear of arrest). The lack of legal status prevents refugees from accessing assistance, basic services and employment, leading to increased poverty, dependence on debt and external assistance, and negative coping mechanisms. 51% of Syrian refugee households live below the survival minimum expenditure basket (<2.9 USD/person/day), while 88% of the refugee households are in debt¹⁷. 43% of school-aged Syrian refugees remain out of school.

Since the start of 2019, there has been a documented increasing trend to enforce stricter restrictions on refugees (i.e. evictions, raids, demolitions of semi-permanent structures in informal settlements, curfews, deportations, potential *refoulement*), causing a significant deterioration in their overall protection environment.

In 2019, organised and localised return initiatives have continued, while the voluntary nature of these returns could not be ascertained. This increasingly coercive environment acts as a strong push factor, prompting refugees to unsafely return to Syria, while the prevailing conditions for return are still not deemed conducive by international standards.

Jordan

In Jordan, 81% of the Syrian refugees registered by UNHCR live in host communities, and 19% live in camps. Movements in and out of camps, where protection needs remain acute, are strictly controlled. Refugees are living in increasingly precarious environments and salaries from legal work for refugees remain very low.

16 VASyR 2018

17 Ibid.

33 000 Syrian refugees still live in host communities without formal documentation. In March 2018, the Jordanian Ministry of Interior and the UNHCR launched a regularisation exercise to formalise the status of Syrian refugees in urban areas. The exercise ended in March 2019. 24 257 new asylum seekers certificates were issued¹⁸. Approximately 31% of school-aged Syrian refugees remain out of school.¹⁹

Following the border closure by Jordan in 2016, between 12 000 and 14 000 particularly vulnerable people remain stranded in “the Berm”/Rukban at the country’s north-eastern border. Living in precarious remote settlements in the desert, the large majority of these people remains in need of urgent and sustained humanitarian assistance. Current restrictions prevent humanitarian actors to ensure adequate and dignified humanitarian assistance. Even though more recent trends are showing a decrease of the population stranded in Rukban, there are indications that most of those still displaced are not willing or able to leave due to personal security reasons, lack of access to their areas of origin and/or previous engagements with various military factions.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

1) National / local response and involvement

Inside Syria

The delivery of humanitarian aid continues to be hindered by deliberate restrictions posed by all parties to the conflict. The ability of the Syrian authorities to deliver public services through various line ministries is limited, while outside government-controlled areas line ministries are almost totally absent. Humanitarian aid is partly channelled through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) Society network and volunteers. In addition, more than 200 national NGOs are partnering with the UN in delivering assistance across the country. International NGOs operating from Damascus are subject to administrative limitations in entering into partnerships with national NGOs. In opposition-controlled areas Syrian NGOs, as well as local councils, play a crucial role in facilitating and delivering humanitarian assistance. Aid delivery remains however challenging in terms of protecting and promoting basic rights of all individuals without discrimination and with full transparency. Availability as well as continuity of services, in particular to those most in need, remains a significant challenge inside Syria.

In neighbouring countries²⁰

The crisis requires longer-term holistic solutions that go beyond traditional humanitarian aid.

In Lebanon, authorities have introduced important modifications in their legislation in favour of refugees such as a waiver of the annual residency fees in 2017. However, the implementation of this policy did not appear to be fully consistent and 73% of the refugee population does not have legal residency²¹.

18 UNHCR, May 2019

19 NRC, July 2019

20 Lebanon and Jordan are not parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

21 VASyR 2018

In Jordan, a robust response with preliminary steps towards a longer term structural response with development actors is implemented, with increased support to education, health, social protection and livelihood.

The Compact Agreement adopted in 2016 between the European Union and Jordan aimed at turning the refugee crisis into a development opportunity. Jordan and the EU also adopted common partnership priorities, agreeing to simplify rules of origin requirements to boost job creation opportunities for both Jordanians and Syrian refugees.

2) International Humanitarian Response

The EU is the leading donor in the international response to the Syria crisis. Together with its Member States, the EU has mobilised more than EUR 17 billion in humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation assistance since the beginning of the crisis²². Of this amount, the European Commission/DG ECHO has allocated more than EUR 2.8 billion in humanitarian aid to Syrians both inside Syria and in the region.

By the end of July 2019²³, donor contributions to humanitarian programmes amounted to the following:

- The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) had received USD 877.4 million, or 26.5% of its funding requirements.
- The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) had received USD 882.1 million, or 16% of its funding requirements.
- The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LRCRP) had received USD 1.24 billion, or 45.0% of its funding requirements.
- The Jordan Response Plan (JRP) received a total of USD 1.6 billion (or 63.9% of its requirements) in 2018, whilst the 2019 appeal had been funded at 5.7%²⁴ only (USD 136 million).

DG ECHO, along with other donors, continues to engage with the UN and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) on the preparation and focus of the 2020 HRP.

Inside Syria

Humanitarian access inside the country remains a key constraint for humanitarian actors operating from different operational hubs, despite UN Security Council Resolutions 2165, 2393 and 2449 on cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria. 26 International NGOs (INGOs) are registered to operate from Damascus. Additional NGOs are currently seeking official registration. The majority of cross-border assistance continues to be provided by UN agencies and INGOs based in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, working with more than 200 Syrian NGOs/CSOs.

The ‘Whole of Syria’ (WoS) coordination architecture is composed of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (RHC) and the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in Syria. Its objective is to ensure a coherent multi-sectorial cross-line and cross-border response. In July 2018 cross-border operations from Jordan to southwest Syria were *de facto* suspended, following the offensive of the Syrian authorities and the retake of areas

22 As of September 2019

23 Financial Tracking System – OCHA – July 2019

24 MoPIC, June 2019

next to the Syrian-Jordan border. DG ECHO will continue to support the centrality of the WoS structure as the only mechanism able to provide the required coordination and the capacity to deliver a coordinated, sustained, principled and efficient response to Syrians.

In neighbouring countries

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) developed under the leadership of national authorities to ensure protection, humanitarian assistance and strengthen the resilience of affected populations, integrates and is aligned with existing national plans, including the JRP, LCRP and country chapters in Egypt, Turkey and Iraq.

The UNHCR leads the inter-agency coordination for the Syrian Refugee Response while UNRWA is responsible for the coordination for the assistance to PRS. Despite the existence of coordination fora, the response remains fragmented.

In Lebanon, the role of INGOs in the global response design is increasingly limited despite some administrative improvements of the regulatory framework.

3) Operational constraints

Humanitarian access remains one of the major impediments to the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers, inside Syria. Parties to the conflict continue to severely restrict and block humanitarian access. NGOs conducting cross-border operations continue to face scrutiny and heavy administrative burdens to operate from neighbouring countries. Renewed efforts should continue to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the coordination mechanisms. Restrictive government regulatory frameworks and policies on asylum, assistance and/or registration continue to have a negative impact on the humanitarian response, as well as on the capacity of OCHA to operate in a meaningful and independent manner.

Meanwhile, operations on remote management remain a challenge. DG ECHO continues to favour the most relevant access modalities to deliver humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Syrians wherever they are in the country. With this objective in mind, DG ECHO has shown a high level of flexibility with its Syria partners since the start of the crisis. Since 2018 and with recent control shifts, access from Damascus to areas located within government-controlled areas has increased, even though DG ECHO acknowledges that access is not always timely, regular or sustained. In line with DG ECHO global policy, remote management of DG ECHO-funded actions will only be considered when duly justified and where no other direct modality of intervention is available or reasonably feasible.

i.) Access/humanitarian space

In Syria

Issues pertaining to access and respect of humanitarian space are specific to the different implementing areas and operational hubs. Nonetheless, the concerns regarding the lack of respect of Internal Humanitarian Law (IHL), of protection of humanitarian workers and duty of care, are commonly shared across all of Syria.

In Government of Syria controlled areas, while access is officially granted, administrative burdens limit movements of humanitarian actors, leaving areas without possible humanitarian assessment. Administrative burden leads to access constraints, leaving some areas underserved or uncovered.

In Northwest Syria, insecurity due to ongoing hostilities and shelling are greatly hampering access to some areas, despite massive levels of need induced by large scale, continuous and fresh displacements. Continued negotiations are required to ensure the respect of humanitarian space by the various parties to the conflict. In areas affected by ongoing conflict, the deliberate targeting of hospitals, schools and civilians, remains a huge concern and may amount to war crimes.

In Northeast Syria, the Turkish incursion into Northeast Syria of 9 October 2019 resulted in major displacement of people evacuation of humanitarian personnel, significant impediments to safe humanitarian access, and the risk closure of programmes.

In neighbouring countries

The security situation in Lebanon is generally stable, with volatility mostly occurring in Palestinian camps where sporadic clashes between different factions occur; temporarily halting the access of humanitarian agencies. The restrictive regulatory framework introduced by the government of Lebanon, including the halting of UNHCR registration and the restrictive border entry for Syrians as well as the increased trends of evictions, raids, and demolitions in informal settlements minimize the effectiveness of the response. Specific attention should be given to the population stranded in the Rukban area (the “berm”). Following the attack of June 2016, Jordan has closed its border with Syria, with the exception of ad hoc and temporary access granted to a limited number of medical cases. According to a recent assessment by the UN and the SARC, between 12 000 and 14 000 people are still displaced in Rukban, with very limited access to food, Non-Food Items (NFIs) and other services such as healthcare. There are no NGOs operating in this area. Supporting advocacy to ensure that these populations get proper access to all relevant services with full respect of basic humanitarian principles remains therefore a humanitarian imperative.

ii) Partners (presence, capacity)

In Syria

For the Government of Syria controlled areas, up to 26 registered INGOs are present in Damascus, in addition to most UN agencies. Nonetheless registration procedures are still a limitation to the further deployment of partners, while visa restrictions for international humanitarian staff are also limiting capacities.

In Northwest Syria, most of the INGOs’ actions are implemented through remote management from the Gaziantep hub via local NGOs. UN agencies are operating under the UN Security Council Resolution 2449 on cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria. Capacities to ensure the current emergency relief operations are nonetheless appropriate but would be stretched (or needed to be extended) in case of a further deterioration of the situation.

In Northeast Syria, partners have an established presence in Raqqa, Aleppo and Hassakeh Governorates. Ensuring continued access to people in need in conditions of safety remains of vital importance in the context of increased hostilities after 9 October. Expanding operations in southern Deir Ez Zor has proved more challenging given the risks of explosive hazards and the very volatility of the context in particular. This has led to the presence of fewer humanitarian actors despite acute needs.

In neighbouring countries

There is a large presence of international organisations in Lebanon, in addition to a growing civil society and NGO presence. Administrative blockages related to INGO registration and issuance of visas/work permits for international staff is affecting the operational humanitarian space and technical capacity in some sectors.

In Jordan, constraints are rather related to the timeliness of the response, resulting from long and cumbersome processes to obtain the approval from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), which remains a precondition for humanitarian projects to be conducted. DG ECHO continues to advocate with the relevant authorities to speed up the approval process.

iii) Absorption capacity on the ground and efficiency of operations

In Syria

In Government of Syria controlled areas, absorption capacity is not a particular concern although frequent and unpredictable administrative limitations of access have limited the effectiveness of the response. Existing international sanctions, such as limitations for monetary transfers or visa policy, also represent an additional burden for humanitarian actors.

In North West and East Syria, there are no reported difficulties of absorption as such. Difficulties instead relate to continued access and security, as well as the fewer number of partners able to operate in the concerned areas. The UN is expanding its presence in northeast Syria to provide regular programming in camps.

In neighbouring countries

In Lebanon, a number of restrictions imposed on the type of assistance humanitarian agencies can implement is impeding an effective and sustainable aid delivery. For instance due to the restrictions put on Shelter and WASH interventions, informal settlements are unable to withstand emergencies.

In Jordan, as mentioned in the previous section, the efficiency of operations can be negatively impacted by delayed approval by MoPIC.

4) Envisaged DG ECHO response and expected results of humanitarian aid interventions

General considerations for all interventions. All humanitarian interventions funded by DG ECHO must take into particular consideration gender promotion policies and demonstrate the integration of gender and age in a coherent manner. Also, all humanitarian interventions funded by DG ECHO must take into consideration any risk of sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) and should develop and implement appropriate strategies to actively prevent such risks. DG ECHO equally urges the establishment of quality, comprehensive and safe SGBV response services. Specific attention will also be paid to the measures ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities in proposed actions. DG ECHO will give particular attention to climate-proofing humanitarian response. For more information see the Thematic Policies Annex.

DG ECHO's response capacity is articulated around a wide field network and presence in the region's key hubs, a regional office in Jordan, substantive and continued funding

delivering on the EU's commitments to support the Syrian population and neighbouring countries. The three Brussels conferences held since 2017 are a clear sign of the EU's continued solidarity and commitment to the Syrian population. DG ECHO is uniquely placed to coordinate and liaise with different humanitarian actors as regards the operational strategy for delivery of humanitarian aid and humanitarian advocacy. DG ECHO will continue to prioritise life-saving assistance and protection activities based on needs and vulnerabilities. DG ECHO partners should target their assistance to the most vulnerable, wherever they are. Winterization support will be considered where it is based on clearly assessed needs and demonstrated capacities to deliver the assistance in a timely fashion. The quality of multi-sectorial assessments, data gathering and analysis is essential to ensure accurate identification of gaps, prioritisation of response and coordination across actors. Quality programming, sound management, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be essential throughout the programme cycle.

DG ECHO continues to encourage a non-discriminatory “one-refugee” approach aiming to support humanitarian interventions targeting the most severely affected populations in need of protection and assistance, irrespective of their country of origin.

DG ECHO encourages integrated approaches, economies of scale, capacity to react to volatile contexts, geographic coverage, cost-efficiency and effectiveness as well as strong referral systems where appropriate. Adherence to sectorial working group, SPHERE standards and DG ECHO policies should also be ensured.

DG ECHO will continue to monitor the conditions for IDPs and refugees' returns to their places of origin, based on the principles of voluntariness, safety and dignity, informed decision-making and freedom of choice of final destination. As conditions for safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable returns are still not met inside Syria, DG ECHO recalls that the humanitarian assistance it provides is based on needs and vulnerability, not on status.

In the particularly challenging humanitarian context of the Syria crisis, humanitarian advocacy, for example promoting compliance to IHL, including the protection of civilians and humanitarian space and access, could be further supported. Advocacy activities aiming to uphold a principled humanitarian response, promote humanitarian space/access and foster the protection of civilians, including that of humanitarian workers and medical personnel, could be supported and, when relevant, integrated in the partner's response strategy. DG ECHO will support such activities where they are based on clearly demonstrated expertise, capacities and strategies, as part of an evidence-based, context-specific advocacy strategy comprising clear and realistic outcomes, together with a detailed advocacy plan, identification of likely risks and related mitigation measures.

In spite of major operational constraints, upholding the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence in a pragmatic manner remains of paramount importance, given the threats posed to humanitarian workers and principled humanitarian assistance. Advocacy must be grounded on continued presence and service delivery.

Finally DG ECHO will continue to work together with other EU services to ensure a coherent, coordinated and sustainable EU response. Joint Humanitarian Development Frameworks will continue to guide such cooperation.

In line with DG ECHO's commitment to the Grand Bargain, pilot Programmatic Partnerships are envisaged with a limited number of partners. Part of this HIP may therefore be awarded to the selected pilot Programmatic Partnerships.

Inside Syria

DG ECHO's response will be implemented based on the EU Strategy for Syria. DG ECHO will maintain its focus on multi-sectorial life-saving actions, set within the “do no harm” principle. Partners are expected to provide a Whole of Syria needs analysis together with justification, including costing, for the choice of hub(-s) and type of delivery. They are encouraged to participate in existing coordination mechanisms. The strategy builds on complementary advocacy actions as part of a humanitarian advocacy framework to sustain operational gains and improve the quality of the response. *Protection* will remain a cross-cutting component across all sectors and as a stand-alone intervention. DG ECHO strategy is developed along the following priority actions:

- ***Emergency response and preparedness (First Line Emergency Response / FLER)*** - including access strategies, duly justified contingency planning, severity scales and scenario/hotspots analysis leading to timely ‘triggers’ identification, rapid first line multi-sectorial emergency response to allow for flexible and timely response to emerging needs and irregular access. DG ECHO's FLER approach provides in-built flexibility in the response to address urgent and emerging needs in a flexible, multi-sectorial manner and as per shifting access and evolution of context.
- ***Protection*** - the application of IHL, IHRL and International Refugee Law (IRL); protection trends and analysis; safe and equal access to services (protection mainstreaming), including evidence-based advocacy, awareness and communication; support to vulnerable people including Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and Child Protection; prevention and response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV); Psycho-Social Support (PSS); case-management; humanitarian demining/mine action and Mine Risk Education (MRE); access to legal aid and civil documentation.
- ***Health*** - focus on improving access to quality essential health services and timely assistance to war wounded and victims of violence including trauma care, Primary Health Care, post-operative and physical rehabilitation care, life-saving obstetric and reproductive health, and Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MH/PSS).
- ***Education in Emergencies (EiE)*** - DG ECHO will continue to support EiE to enable safe access to quality education, with a special focus on Out Of School Children (OOSC) and the provision of Non Formal Education (NFE) to promote reintegration into Formal Education; reduce the vulnerability of children affected by conflict, especially of those affected by negative coping mechanisms, through addressing specific barriers to their access to education. Integrated **Child Protection** activities (identification, case management, PSS, referrals, etc.) will be requested, either in the form of direct service delivery or through referral mechanisms to specialised partners.
- ***Multi-purpose assistance*** - Gaps in assistance provision, including underserved or neglected communities, need to be addressed; support to common, integrated and targeted approaches and to inter-operable beneficiaries’ platforms to address basic needs and services through the most relevant and cost-efficient approach (preferably the modality of cash transfer when feasible), in a timely manner and, to the extent possible, the identification of transition strategies should also be considered and promoted where they respond to life-saving needs. Recognising that context is critical to decision making, the focus should be on harmonizing the response modalities and methodologies, possibly reducing duplication in the data management and in the payment system wherever possible.

In addition to **FLEP**, programming in under-served, contested, Hard to Reach, newly accessible areas, and areas with restrictive operational environment/prone to displacement, will be prioritized. For all sectors, DG ECHO will support activities that respond to specific shocks and needs, with duly justified assessment and targeting. Consideration will be given to the support of protracted needs of IDPs and host communities to reach basic minimum standards where gaps in life-saving assistance provision exist. DG ECHO will also consider **Emergency livelihood** interventions with the aim of strengthening livelihood opportunities critical to food security as well as restoring previous income generating activities.

To implement this strategy, the following will be considered:

- An overarching emphasis on cost efficiency and effectiveness, including, but not limited to, vulnerability targeting, flexibility of actions responding to newly and/or quickly emerging needs, addressing basic needs through the most appropriate and relevant transfer modality depending on the context, improving inter-hub coordination and harmonization, capacity building.
- Partners' humanitarian acceptance/access strategies should be explained and address urgent needs. DG ECHO expects that all interventions adhere to basic protection principles of “do no harm”, safe and equal access, accountability and participation of beneficiaries as well as appropriate considerations for context-specific vulnerabilities. In the context of a crisis where direct implementation is not always feasible, particular attention needs to be paid to the ability and capacity of partners (including that of their Implementing Partners/IPs) to safely and impartially deliver humanitarian assistance with adequate control mechanisms in place (e.g. robust management capacities, including those of local IPs, access and monitoring capacities, due diligence, risks analysis, in line with DG ECHO related policy). Robust project cycle management will be requested. Special attention will also be paid to thorough risk analysis. Specific attention to a qualitative partnership/localisation approach should be applied. Considerations on child safeguarding and the Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) should also be addressed.
- Innovative access strategies and contingency planning which prioritise continuity and complementarity of services should be the basis of operational thinking.
- DG ECHO encourages all partners, when conducting a protection risk analysis prior and during the implementation phase, to ensure that projects follow protection principles and address key protection risks.
- Activities which address recurring infrastructure costs such as care and maintenance of basic service networks, although recognised as important, are beyond the scope of DG ECHO's capability and will not be prioritised.

The strategy illustrated above will be applied to all operational hubs in the spirit of the Whole of Syria approach. Wherever possible and appropriate, DG ECHO will plan a gradual and combined dual track approach towards more resilience-oriented activities together with other EU financial instruments (e.g. European Neighbourhood Instrument/ENI, the EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace/IcSP).

In neighbouring countries

In Lebanon, DG ECHO will continue to support the most effective life-saving and protection assistance to the most vulnerable, while further strengthening the delivery of

integrated multi-sector humanitarian response to address protracted humanitarian and sudden unmet needs.

DG ECHO will explicitly promote models which challenge and enhance efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of the humanitarian response and coordination.

- **Access to basic needs:** addressing the protracted socio-economic needs of the most vulnerable refugees.
- **Multi-sector response:** addressing emergency and acute needs at community, household and individual levels.
- **Protection:** ensuring improved access to protection, legal assistance, quality services.
- **Advocacy:** stimulating specific changes at policy level and/or addressing critical structural and programmatic gaps in the current response.
- **Education in Emergencies (EiE):** activities that ensure safe access to quality education targeting OOSC and the most vulnerable children. Integrated **Child Protection** activities (identification, case management, PSS, referrals, etc.) will be requested, either in the form of direct service delivery or through referral mechanisms.

In Jordan, DG ECHO will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to undocumented and unregistered refugees and new arrivals within host communities, persons stranded in border areas and refugees living in camps.

Protection will remain a cross-cutting component across all sectors. DG ECHO priorities will focus on the following:

- **Reach the unmet basic needs** for the most vulnerable people as identified by the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) and on protection grounds. Basic needs assistance is to be transitioned to more predictable and longer-term models as the crisis in Jordan protracts, exploring alternative EU funding.
- **Enable access to basic services** for the most vulnerable if excluded from the government's commitments and/or from development assistance.
- **Health:** While advocating for continuing access to health services for all refugees (with the main focus on those living in camps), host communities and for those stranded at the Berm/Rukban, DG ECHO funding for health care provision will mostly focus on life-saving and reproductive health care.
- **Protection:** legal assistance, including support for documentation and enhancing the protection environment for the most vulnerable population.
- **Education in Emergencies (EiE):** activities that enable safe access to quality education targeting OOSC, children at risk of dropping out and other most vulnerable groups. Specific attention should be given to children with disabilities and those affected by negative coping mechanisms, through addressing specific barriers to their access to education. Integrated **Child Protection** activities will be requested, either in the form of direct service delivery or through referral mechanisms.

Thematic priorities

The thematic priorities detailed in the **Technical Annex** envisage their mainstreaming into enhanced quality humanitarian interventions. DG ECHO will ensure that partners' funding proposals comply with thematic priorities as an assessment criterion.

IHL/IHRL/IRL/Protection/Access: DG ECHO will continue to encourage and support efforts to influence parties to the conflict to respect IHL, ensure the protection of civilians (including humanitarian workers and health personnel) and civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, and improve humanitarian access. Field-based sustained dialogue and engagement with armed actors, local authorities and power brokers should be considered. DG ECHO is ready to support systemic access negotiation solutions available to all humanitarian actors and in support of timely emergency response across all operational hubs. Basic protection monitoring, trends and analysis within Syria and across borders which act as an early warning for new population movements is also encouraged.

Education in Emergencies: Despite progress achieved in preventing Syrian children from becoming a ‘lost generation’, combined efforts are far from achieving this goal. In both Lebanon and Jordan, DG ECHO will closely coordinate its intervention with other EU instruments such as the ENI and the EU Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, which support structural and education programmes. DG ECHO will advocate and complement development actors' efforts, for example through Non-Formal Education (NFE) and other activities to address emergency-related barriers to quality education so that children affected by the crisis can enter (or re-enter) Formal Education. EiE responses should target OOSC and those at risk of dropping out through integrated education and child protection actions (or referrals to specialised actors).

Coordination: Effective coordination is essential. Although central to the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, the WoS architecture is still to be translated into an overall effective coordinated operational response across multiple hubs. While the system should be flexible enough to respond to needs efficiently, practice to date is relatively static. Effort to enhance efficiency should continue. DG ECHO expects its partners to take an active part in coordination mechanisms (e.g. clusters, technical working groups).

4. HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION.

1) Other DG ECHO interventions

In March 2019, the EU hosted and co-chaired the third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, pledging EUR 6.2 billion for 2019, as well as multi-year pledges of EUR 2.09 billion for 2020 and beyond for humanitarian and development assistance to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey. Since 2011, DG ECHO has mobilised more than EUR 920 million in humanitarian assistance inside Syria, EUR 516 million in Lebanon and EUR 360 million in Jordan.

2) Other donors’s engagement.

At the Brussels III Conference, over EUR 8.25 billion was raised in pledges – EUR 6.2 billion for 2019 and a further EUR 2.09 billion for 2020 and beyond, of which more than two thirds came from the EU and its Member States. Key non-EU donors include Canada, Norway and Japan.

5. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

1) Other concomitant EU interventions

The EU and its Member States have been leading the international response to the Syrian regional crisis, mobilising to date more than EUR 17 billion for humanitarian, stabilisation, economic and resilience assistance to support Syrians inside the country and in neighbouring countries (including Iraq, Turkey and Egypt). A further EUR 5.58 billion was pledged by the EU and its Member States at the Brussels III Conference for 2019, representing 79% of all pledges.

DG ECHO will continue to coordinate with other EU instruments in order to bridge humanitarian assistance with development responses through Joint Humanitarian and Development Frameworks to guide financial allocations in priority sectors. In Lebanon and Jordan, a strong nexus between DG ECHO and the Madad Trust Fund and programmatic complementarities are integral part of DG ECHO programming.

2) Exit scenarios

In Syria, the co-existence of both protracted and acute humanitarian needs make exit scenarios still premature. The compounded effects of a continued conflict, lack of security and protection, absence or insufficient availability of basic services and commodities, continued large-scale displacement and widespread levels of vulnerability are not conducive to safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable returns or regular development interventions, in a context where the European Union does not work with the authorities. DG ECHO will nonetheless seek to increase coherence and complementarity with other instruments and continue its JHDF exercise with DG NEAR.

In neighbouring countries, DG ECHO will continue to advocate for durable solutions for refugees (including resettlement and access to livelihoods) and will call for increased funding and coordination with development donors and hosting governments.

In Lebanon and Jordan, the needs of refugees entered a care and maintenance phase (both in camps and outside of camps). Whilst humanitarian assistance remains crucial, DG ECHO continues to reshape its intervention to favour complementarities with stabilisation/resilience/development instruments better fit to provide long-term development support, in line with the EU strategy. This includes the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), and EU Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis (Madad).